

As a 17-year-old, Alantae Cole has seen his share of hardship. After falling in with the wrong crowd in high school, he started using drugs and skipping school. Soon, he was kicked out of school. But because of a Lake County-based organization, Alantae has a second chance for a better life.

YouthBuild Lake County helps at-risk youth learn a trade through job training and encourages participants to work toward their GEDs. Nearly 50 youths currently participate in the program.

I visited a YouthBuild site today in North Chicago where Alantae and dozens of other trainees are building two homes. In addition to building badly needed affordable housing, the students are learning skills that will help them get jobs after they leave the program.

Understanding how important YouthBuild is to the community, we were able to work with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to get a \$700,000 grant for the program. YouthBuild also has received incredible support from local officials and businesses. Mayor Leon Rockingham and the city of North Chicago donated the land for the projects and W.W. Grainger, a locally-based company, donated tools and equipment.

All of the students I met at the job site today have promising futures, thanks to YouthBuild. The organization is a shining example of what public-private cooperation can bring to a community.